

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 11108

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, TH, LA

SUBJ: LOCAL REACTION TO THE LOWENSTEIN-MOOSE REPORT

SUMMARY: ONE BANGKOK NEWSPAPER, THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE THE NATION, HAS GIVEN EXTENSIVE SERIALIZED PRESS PLAY TO THE SUBSTANCE OF THE LOWENSTEIN-MOOSE REPORT. THE THAI AND CHINESE VERNACULAR PRESS HAS GIVEN SOME BUT CONSIDERABLY LESS COVERAGE. THE RTA CHIEF OF STAFF, GEN. SURAKIT MAYALARP, REACTED TO THE FIRST STORIES WITH A COMPLAINT ABOUT USG REVELATIONS OF RTG SECRET MATERIAL. LTGEN KRIANGSAK CHOMANAN, SUPREME COMMAND DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, SAID THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF HAS DEMANDED AN EXPLANATION FOR THE RELEASE, AND HINTED THAT THE SUPREME COMMAND MIGHT WITHHOLD SENSITIVE INFORMATION FROM US. END SUMMARY.

1. THE AGGRESSIVE BUT SMALL CIRCULATION (ESTIMATED 5,000 COPIES) ENGLISH LANGUAGE THE NATION GAVE SERIALIZED NEWS AND SOME EDITORIAL COVERAGE BEGINNING JULY 10 OF THE CONTENTS OF THE 11 JUNE 1973 LOWENSTEIN-MOOSE STAFF REPORT "THAILAND, LAOS, CAMBODIA, AND VIETNAM: APRIL 1973." THE ARTICLES CULMINATED IN A TWO PAGE EXCERPT IN THE JULY 15 EDITION. THE KEY AREAS PUBLICIZED HAVE BEEN THE INSURGENCY, THE
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SIZE OF THE US MILITARY PRESENCE, THE RTG SUPPORT

OF THE CHINESE IRREGULAR FORCES IN NORTH THAILAND, AND THE US FUNDING OF BASE SECURITY FORCES. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AMOUNTS OF MILITARY AID AND THE THAI PUBLIC REACTION TO THE US PRESENCE, AND THAT BETWEEN LAST YEAR'S ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE THAILAND (AAT) PACKAGE AND THE RECENT SUPPLEMENTAL MILITARY BUDGET WAS ALSO PRESENTED. THE JULY 15 SUNDAY NATION DEVOTED TWO PAGES TO EXCERPTS FROM THE L&M REPORT ON THE LAO WAR.

2. ONE EDITORIAL FOCUSED ON THE REVELATION IN THE L&M REPORT THAT THE INSURGENCY WAS GAINING GROUND FASTER THAN RTG COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORTS. THE OTHER URGED THE RTG TO PLAN NOW WHAT THAILAND IS GOING TO DO WITH THE US FINANCED THAI VOLUNTEERS IN LAOS WHEN THE USG CEASES TO PAY THEM.

3. THE THAI LANGUAGE SIAM RATH COLUMNIST "BLACK COFFEE" HAS RUN TWO SEGMENTS OF WHAT MAY BE A LONGER SERIAL CRITICIZING THE RTG FOR NOT INFORMING THE THAI PUBLIC BETTER ON THE ISSUES DISCUSSED IN THE L&M REPORT. TWO CHINESE LANGUAGE PAPERS REPLAYED THE NATION'S FIRST DAY'S COVERAGE OF THE REPORT, BUT HAVE SINCE IGNORED IT.

4. GEN. SURAKIJ MAYALARP, THE RTA CHIEF OF STAFF, REGISTERED RTG CONCERN AND DISAPPROVAL OF THE DISCLOSURES BY "U.S. EMBASSY OR OTHER U.S. OFFICIALS" OF "RTG SECRET AND TOP SECRET INFORMATION" IN A JULY 11 CONVERSATION WITH TWO MILITARY OFFICERS ATTACHED TO THE EMBASSY. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT "THESE ARE ... EXAMPLES OF WHAT HAS OCCURRED OVER AND OVER AGAIN."

5. LTGEN KRIANGSAK CHOMANAN, THE SUPREME COMMAND DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, MADE A LENGTHY COMPLAINT TO THE POMIL COUNSELOR JULY 17. KRIANGSAK DISPLAYED CLIPPINGS FROM THE NATION, AND A NOTE FROM FIELD MARSHAL THANOM WHICH HE SAID DEMANDED AN EXPLANATION OF HOW SENSITIVE THAI INFORMATION HAD REACHED THE PRESS THROUGH US CHANNELS. THE MOST SEVERE REACTION WAS TO THE STORY ON RTG SUPPORT FOR THE CIF, BUT THE SUPREME COMMAND WAS ALSO UNHAPPY ABOUT OTHER REVELATIONS THE RTG CONSIDER CLASSIFIED.
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KRIANGSAK INDICATED THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SUPREME COMMAND STAFF WOULD BE ORDERED TO WITHHOLD ALL THAI SENSITIVE INFORMATION FROM USG REPRESENTATIVES TO AVOID HAVING IT PASSED TO THE PRESS, ALTHOUGH HE INSISTED THAT HE PERSONALLY WAS ARGUING FOR CONTINUING THE PRESENT CONFIDENTIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EMBASSY. EMBASSY OFFICERS MENTIONED DISCUSSIONS WITH HIM OF ASPECTS OF THE 1972 L&M DRAFT PRIOR TO RELEASE, BUT SAID THAT NO SIMILAR OPPORTUNITY

HAD BEEN ACCORDED US FOR SUCH CLEARANCE THIS YEAR.

6. COMMENT: THE REMARKS OF SURAKIJ AND KRIANG SAK ARE REMINDERS THAT THESE KINDS OF INSUFFICIENTLY SANITIZED DIVULGENCES OF MATERIAL PROVIDED TO US IN CONFIDENCE UNDERMINE CUMULATIVELY THE TYPE OF CLOSE WORKING RELATIONS WE STILL ENJOY HERE. WE NEED THIS CLOSENESS AND CONFIDENTIALITY NOW MORE THAN EVER AS WE AND THE THAI MOVE INTO A NEW AND LESS CERTAIN POST-VIETNAM ERA.

7. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN HELPFUL IF WE HAD RECEIVED A TELEGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF THE CONTROVERSIAL PORTIONS OF THE REPORT AS REQUESTED IN OUR 9200. POUCHED COPIES DID NOT ARRIVE UNTIL JUNE 30, AND BY THEN THAI WERE AROUSED OVER WIRE SERVICE ACCOUNTS OF L&M REPORT AND PROBLEM OF REASSURING THEM WAS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT.
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